



California Partnership for the San Joaquin Valley – Final Seed Grant Report
University of California, Merced's eHealth Network Project Report
Prepared February 9, 2009

Successful Valley Telemedicine Outcome

The University of California, Merced surpassed its originally funded goal of implementing four eHealth Centers throughout the Valley, finishing the project with a total of six telemedicine sites in 2008. This achievement followed a survey process, funded by the California Emerging Technologies Fund with support from the AT&T Foundation, to assess telemedicine readiness levels at 84 San Joaquin Valley healthcare sites, resulting in the selection of the first six locations.

Introducing the Six Site SJV eHealth Network

Of these first six SJV sites, three facilities are hospitals and three are outpatient clinics. Two of these facilities will play key roles in improving access to specialty care, as they are financially able to perform specialty consults with low income patients via telemedicine. The ability to provide these consults is unique in the California healthcare landscape, and more of these providers are critically needed to improve specialty healthcare access to rural and underserved populations throughout the state. The remaining four sites will use telemedicine to access specialty care that is unavailable to their patients locally.

UC Merced's six eHealth partnering sites include:

- 1 San Joaquin General Hospital, French Camp – Specialty Care Provider Site
- 2 Castle Family Health, Atwater – Specialty Care Provider Site
- 3 John C. Fremont Hospital, Greeley Hill – End User Site*
- 4 Sierra Kings District Hospital, Reedley – End User Site
- 5 United Health Center, Kerman – End User Site
- 6 Oildale Community Health Center, National Health Services, Inc., Bakersfield – End User Site

**This facility replaces the originally selected Mercy Medical Center in Merced (end user) after a corporate decision to delay telemedicine until they occupy the new hospital in 2010.*

UC Merced's SJV eHealth Infrastructure

The initial six sites were connected via a low cost (to sites), securely managed eHealth network connecting to a hub at UC Merced which allows the facilities to communicate with each other, as well as call outside of the local group. This hub was created to accommodate up to 8 partnering

sites at T1 speeds to allow for some future expansion of the project. All six sites are equipped with Polycomm HDX-8000 moveable cart system units which provide state of the art HD video conferencing capabilities using 42" displays.

Unique Focus on Program Development

Since the successful use of telemedicine requires far more than simply connecting and equipping sites, UC Merced also placed a special focus on assisting these sites with individual program development. For instance, two-piece, franchise style marketing tools were created in four different languages (English, Spanish, Hmong, Laotian) for customizable, on-demand internal marketing efforts, allowing programs to be promoted effectively and affordably - right away. Telemedicine program training was also provided to site coordinators and administrators at UC Davis' Two Day Telemedicine Training Course at the Telemedicine Learning Center in order to assist sites in designing their own unique programs. Training included: business development and planning, legislation and billing guidelines and proper implementation of best practices.

Finally, because program support and information sharing is key to telemedicine success, UC Merced formed the Valley Telehealth Partnership, or "VTP" for the purpose of creating a long-term, supportive regional telemedicine networking community to allow new and existing sites to promote their programs and/or problem solve amongst each other. The first open forum VTP meeting was held via video conference in December 2008 to discuss current project status, needs and concerns regarding telemedicine here in the Valley. More meetings, and a media event, are anticipated to take place in 2009. In order to assist sites between meetings, an evolving VTP website offering program tools, a calendar of events and a telemedicine user directory is also under way. Download UC Merced's VTP [Brochure](#) and [Mailer](#) at the Partnership's Advanced Communications Services Work Group Web page

Project's Anticipated Outcomes

The clinical and financial outcomes of these six telemedicine programs will be monitored over the next year using data collected from monthly and quarterly utilization reports. An end of year report will be compiled to document these findings and to make future suggestions for improvement and/or expansion of programs.

It is UC Merced's hope that these initial sites will begin to form a strong foundation to support an expanded network of successful telemedicine use in the Valley, with the results being greater patient access to specialty healthcare and improved training opportunities for physicians, current and future medical students and allied health care professionals in the region.